



COMMITTEE ON
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Pallone: GOP's Only New Idea is Literally Half-Written

"This legislation does nothing to stop insurers from setting premiums based on a person's health status."

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) slammed Republican efforts to move forward legislation to undermine consumer protections in the Affordable Care Act today at a Health Subcommittee hearing:*

Republicans have been rooting for the demise of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) for seven years, actively trying to sabotage the law. They have done this under the guise of having "a better way." Today, it is clear that this was never the case. Now that the time has come for them to actually show the public this "better way", they are in complete disarray. Today, it is clear that Republicans have no plan to replace the ACA. Every day their timeline changes and all they've successfully done so far is create chaos and uncertainty among patients and insurance companies.

The bills we are discussing today are supposedly "the first pieces" of the Republican's elusive plan. So essentially, after a 7 year smear campaign on the ACA, they intend to move forward three bills from last Congress that help insurance companies instead of people. Another new bill, the only quote-unquote replacement, is literally half-written.

H.R. 708 would roll back protections against age discrimination, causing a substantial increase in costs for older Americans while doing little to lower costs for young adults. H.R. 706 would further restrict Special Enrollment Period (SEP) enrollment, which could create a barrier to care and ultimately make the SEP risk pool more costly. H.R. 710 would shorten the grace period so that if a person misses one monthly premium payment, or even a portion of that payment, they would be kicked off their insurance and would not be able to gain coverage until the next open enrollment period.

We have been asking Republicans for 7 years to work with us to strengthen the ACA, to make coverage more affordable and accessible. These bills do the opposite. In fact, none of these bills will prevent 30 million Americans from losing their health care coverage or solve the chaos that Republicans have caused with their threats of ACA repeal.

Finally, the bill we are reviewing for the first time today—Chairman Walden’s half written draft—deeply troubles me. Reading this bill the average person might think that Republicans are maintaining protections for people with preexisting conditions like they have today under the ACA—just as they have promised they would. Chairman Walden’s legislation would in fact prohibit an insurance company from excluding a pre-existing condition or denying someone coverage because they have a pre-existing condition. But what’s so deceptive about this legislation is that it would allow an insurer to charge a person more for having a preexisting condition.

This legislation does nothing to stop insurers from setting premiums based on a person’s health status, which means that cancer patients, autistic children, and diabetics may not be technically excluded from a health plan, but could face extremely unaffordable premiums. Insurers could charge them anything they wanted. This bill would clearly take us back to the days when insurers could price people out of coverage because they didn’t think they were healthy enough. It puts insurance companies back in charge of your care. Republicans should be honest with the American people about their intentions for our health care system and not continue to spread falsehoods that they are keeping the ACA’s preexisting conditions provisions.

As the days go by, it’s quite clear to me Republicans have no intention of following through on President Trump’s promise of “insurance for everybody.” Health care is a basic right, and Democrats will continue to fight Republican efforts to roll back coverage and consumer protections at every turn.

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